


2010 Strategic Plan Comments Received (as of 8/13/2010)

Individual	Comment	Notes
<p>Michael Livingston, President</p> 	<p>I have read with interest your call for feedback regarding the State Board’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015. As the newly elected President of the Vermont Independent School Association (VISA) I welcome the opportunity to respond.</p> <p>Under Educational Leadership, strategies, #1, I would like to imagine that “engaging appropriate partners” would include experienced educators from the Independent school community. The interests of all Vermont’s school children will be best served when we deliberately and intentionally bring together the widest possible and most diverse group of educators we can assemble. Approximately 11,000 children and their families chose an Independent school education. Those schools are diverse, vibrant, thriving educational institutions. All our children would profit from mutual collaboration by educators from the public and Independent school sectors.</p> <p>Under PK-16 Partnerships I would like to suggest that the expansion of school choice for all Vermont school children be added as strategy #5.</p> <p>Thank you for allowing for reflection and discussion of this important document. VISA members look forward to regularly attending State Board meetings to continue these and other important conversations.</p>	
<p>Retta Dunlap (EdWatch Vermont)</p> <p>(8/13/10)</p>	<p>First, thank you for the time you put into this. It is not an easy job.</p> <p>The first thing one reads in the draft are the mission and vision statements. They set the tone for the rest of the draft and my concerns center on the vision statement. It is too narrow and has the wrong focus. My concerns are over the use of the phrase “public education system.” My initial reaction was did we not just have a 3 year long discussion on transforming education and an awful lot of people say that the focus needs to be <i>shifted away from the system and towards the learner</i>? Yet, I am reading a lot about the ‘public education system’ in the vision.</p> <p>In addition and over that 3 year period of time, I listened to quite a bit of that conversation about transformation and I am not sensing a transformative piece in the vision statement even though there is some good transformative phraseology in it. It could have been written 10 years ago. This is because it is not about the learner. I know that a system can not be changed over night and that</p>	

	<p>sometimes baby steps are required and I also know that the State Board of Education's responsibility, your primary function, is to supervise and manage the department of education and the <i>public school</i> system (16 V.S.A. §164). What you are talking about in the vision statement and what you manage is the public school system and the transference of money for the education of students. That is not transformation.</p> <p>Still, why can't the vision statement be out side of the box? Why limit the learner in a vision statement by telling them where they can accomplish these things? Also, there are other provisions in the Statutes that give you <i>limited oversight</i> of other educational systems, for example, home study programs and the independent schools and yet the vision is as though learners can not do these things unless they are in the public education system. <i>The vision should be broader and about the universal learner in universal educational settings.</i> The strategic plan will eventually get to the details of how to support the majority of learners in a public school system, how to transform that system, and should recognize that "every" learner does not attend a public school and thus this particular strategic plan does not apply to everyone. Many of these other learners are simply under different strategic plans. Your strategic plan simply means you are complying with your statutory duties to oversee the public schools.</p> <p>As a way of illustrating this, many independent schools in Vermont have been doing many of the things of transformation for years and also home study programs, which are a viable way to accomplish the vision of transformation and yet I would not want you to mention them in the vision statement. <i>The vision should be about learners and not systems.</i> I would suggest the vision statement read as follows:</p> <p>Vision – <i>Every learner should be supported to complete his or her learning experience with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, continuing education, careers, and citizenship. The learner needs an educational system that provides her or him with flexible learning environments rich with 21st century tools that promote self-development, academic achievement, and active engagement in learning. Educational settings should provide high expectations for every learner with support from educators, families and the community.</i></p> <p>This kind of vision statement not only recognizes the diverse educational settings we have in Vermont, it opens up the world to the learner and makes this about much more than budgets, buildings, and boundaries. It makes it about the needs of the learner – a very transformational concept, indeed.</p>	
<p>Carol Baker Waterville, Vermont (Public) (8/12/10)</p>	<p>Here are my comments, as a parent, as a teacher, and as a former student:</p> <p>1) When considering early childhood education and "readiness" for kindergarten, emphasis should be placed on children's developmental needs and stages. Meeting children where they are does more to prepare them for the next stage than trying to prepare them for the next stage before they are there.</p>	

	<p>2) When placing emphasis on data collection, consider how to gather data on the WHOLE child, not just their math, language and science scores. This is the missing link - how are our children doing OVERALL?</p> <p>3) If I were to create this plan it would look very different. It would say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Know what kids need. b) Ask kids what they want. c) Ask parents what they need for their kids. d) Ask teachers what they need for their kids. e) Figure out how to support them so they can get what they need. <p>4) In your focus on "21st Century Practices" always remember that there is NOTHING NEW. It has all been done before. Really. Learn your history. What students need for the future, what they really need, is no different. They need to know how to get along well with others, how to read, write and do math, how to think, where to find information, and how to process, digest, and communicate that information. In our drive to provide this we must support and encourage rather than crush their innate curiosity, creativity, imagination, playfulness, and movement. That's it. See, it's easy!</p> <p>Thank you for listening, and please consider this seriously as you draft policy that directly affects me, my children, and my students.</p>	
<p>Mary Beth McNulty (DOE)</p> <p>(8/9/10)</p>	<p>I would recommend that the SBE reference our alt routes in the following goal: Work with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) and pre-service (including institutions of higher education and alternate routes) and in-service providers (including education service agencies) to ensure teachers are prepared to use evidence-based teaching and learning practices.</p> <p>We have 4 alternate route providers in Vermont and I would hate to leave them out.</p> <p>I would also add that I'm not clear on what they mean by "evidence-based teaching and learning practices." Does this refer to any particular practices or is it a general comment that teachers must be prepared using what research indicates are best practices?</p> <p>Thanks so much for asking for our feedback!</p>	
<p>Cathy Hilgendorf (Parent & Taxpayer) (DOE)</p> <p>(8/5/10)</p>	<p>I was disappointed to see no reference to consolidation or fiscal management. Unless school districts boldly scale back expenditures by being willing to acknowledge (and eliminate) excesses and luxuries we grew accustomed to in the roaring 80's and 90's, real educational progress will continue to be hampered by human capital and fiscal capital spread too thin. If it isn't the State Board's role to shed light on that issue, then whose is it?</p>	<p>Cathy Hilgendorf (Parent & Taxpayer) (DOE)</p> <p>(8/5/10)</p>

<p>DOUG FERREIRA dsferreira@att.net (Public) (8/4/10)</p>	<p>Here are some points to consider to reduce the high cost of education in Vermont.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full time students have decreased by more than 8% while the number of teachers has increased by 14.8%. 2. The number of teaching assistants has increased by 40.9% 3. Teacher to student ratios are on an average of 10 to 12 teachers per student. 4. Teachers that were given a monetary incentive to retire early, did so, took the money, and were rehired as teachers assistants <p>It is time to expose the teachers union, and its greedy, inconsiderate members for what they are:::GREEDY, SELFISH, INCONSIDERATE...</p> <p>It is obvious by these statistics, that the field of education is over staffed, over paid, and under worked.</p> <p>Reducing the amount of positions in the teaching profession, consolidating schools, and non teaching positions, and putting a hiring freeze, and wage freeze is what is needed. Awarding raises at period when tax revenues are reduced considerably, is simply not being fiscally responsible. Many Government and private companies have reduced staff, employees have taken cuts in salary, and benefits, and some people have lost jobs. The teachers' union thinks they are above all of this, and continue ask for more benefits, wages, jobs, and more time off... They are a big part of the high cost of education, property taxes, and in no way want to be part of the solution. They would rather throw everyone else under the bus. They have proven to me, through their action, to be a group of inconsiderate, selfish, greedy hiding behind students, and education...</p> <p>It time to trim the FAT in education, and get rid to the waste, and unnecessary bloated staff... Close marginal schools, consolidate others, consolidate superintendent jobs, eliminate others, increase class size, and get efficient.</p> <p>The hay days of unlimited tax revenues, and waste are gone....</p> <p>Thank you for trying to get a handle on the high cost of education</p>	
<p>John Spinney (DOE) (10/30/09)</p>	<p>The goals themselves look great! My question is around measurability. How will we know we have reached these goals? Will there be specific objectives and benchmarks to show us whether or not we are moving toward reaching the goals? How will we quantify success?</p>	
<p>Anne Bordonaro (DOE) (10/22/09)</p>	<p>I have a few concerns about the verbs in the Goals.</p> <p>Goal I – “Establish” (should this be “Promote use of” or “Require use of”?). The SBE and the DOE don’t establish teaching and learning practices.</p> <p>Goal II – “Provide” (should this be “Encourage, Develop, or Support”?). The SBE and DOE</p>	<p>Anne Bordonaro (DOE) (10/22/09)</p>

	<p>don't provide leaders, but we can support and promote the development of transformative school leaders. And I think this goal should focus explicitly on school and district leadership as opposed to educational leadership more generally in order that the strategies that are implemented to accomplish it can be more focused and effective.</p> <p>Goal III – “Ensure that each school provides a safe and flexible learning environment”? We don't ensure an environment per se.</p>	
<p>Doug Dows (former DOE) (10/22/09)</p>	<p>The mission is way too wordy. Do we need to have both the State Board and Department mentioned in the mission? Does the mission for Hewlett Packard mention the Board of Hewlett Packard?</p> <p>The mission of the Vermont Department of Education is...</p> <p>What does “in transformation of” mean? Isn't all leadership transformative? Transformation/leadership is redundant. Mission statements should endure; buzz words, by definition, do not.</p> <p>...to lead the Vermont educational system...</p> <p>I am glad there is a standard of quality, but it is expressed as an <i>outcome</i>, i.e. “learner(s) ...succeed in the 21st century”. That's a vision; missions are about what the organization <i>will do</i>, that distinguishes it from the other similar organizations, to achieve the vision.</p> <p>..to compete globally.</p> <p>Mission statements should set measurable boundaries so that employees, legislators, customers, etc., can easily answer the question “are we accomplishing our mission”? The current mission statement begs many questions making it difficult to know if we are being successful.</p> <p>Do we provide enough support? If we do, does our support lead to transformation? What is transformation? Do we provide enough opportunities to succeed? What are “opportunities”?</p>	